



GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF PROPOSED WORKS

Following the recent publication of English Heritage's statement "New Work in Historic Churches" and the Association of Diocesan and Cathedral Archaeologists 2004 guidance note "Requirements for works on churches and churchyards" and it may be helpful to summarise some of the issues concerning the archaeological potential of churches.

In preparing a brief for proposed works to a historic building it is important to assess the history of the structure (see E.H. statement para 4.1.1). The site of the church itself may often be of considerable antiquity and can contain evidence of an earlier church or churches, or even remains of pre-Christian or prehistoric date. **Every effort should be made to avoid disturbing possible archaeological remains in the Church or Churchyard (see para 4.1.2).**

Many churchyards contain the burials of centuries and the memorials to these may be of historic interest in themselves. Some monuments and tombstones are listed as historic structures in their own right separately from the church and these are **not** exempt from listed building control. **The absence of tombstones should never be taken as an indication of the absence of burials.** Archaeological investigations often reveal unmarked burials, some of which can be of relatively recent date. It is also imprudent to make assumptions about the depth at which burials are likely to be found. The ground level of the churchyard may have been reduced in some cases rather than increased, where radical re-arrangement has occurred in the past. Besides burials there may be old foundations or other remains below ground which are historically just as important as the standing building (see E.H. statement para 4.1.5).

Early consultation is important and archaeological advice should be sought at the preliminary stages particularly where the building includes medieval fabric or occupies a medieval or town centre site. The county archaeological officers of East and West Sussex will be pleased to offer advice.

It may be that an archaeological evaluation carried out by a professional archaeological contractor is required and the parochial church council should bear in mind that both this and any subsequent work might cost them money. The excavations may, however, be cost effective in the long term, if it leads to mitigation measures that avoid disturbance to archaeological deposits. The evaluation can also inform any future proposals within the area. This archaeological response can be achieved in one operation but may require a two-stage process.

The evaluation is intended primarily to establish the extent and depth of archaeological deposits, not necessarily to exhaustively record and thereby destroy those deposits in the process. The significance of evaluation is to determine whether any remains exist which deserve to be preserved 'in situ' and would warrant a modification to the design proposals to secure this.

Where deposits are found which do not require preservation 'in situ' it may be that further work is needed to make a full record of the archaeological potential of the site revealed by the initial evaluation. The background to the process of archaeological evaluation is outlined in the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance note 16 of November 1990.

Likely situations where archaeological advice should be sought include:

- ❖ Proposals for installing gas or electrical supplies. These may require trenches to be excavated through the churchyard at a depth that may disturb burials and archaeological deposits. Where new openings in walls are proposed every effort should be made to avoid cutting into mediaeval masonry. If no other option is open archaeological advice should be sought at an early stage to assess the implications of the work. Fixing pipes, wiring, ducts and flues also require sensitive treatment inside and out (see E.H. statement para 7.4.2).
- ❖ Proposals for installing other piped services; for example where kitchen and lavatory facilities are to be provided which require a water supply, drainage and ventilation (E.H. statement 7.5.1).
- ❖ Proposals for improved access; new paths, drives etc. which require surface water drainage and the construction of soakaways and inspection chambers in churchyards.
- ❖ Proposals for new buildings and extensions. A principal consideration in the siting of a new building or extension is the likely impact on the fabric of the existing church and its setting and surroundings. However, the siting should also take into account implications for archaeological remains. Where important below ground remains are known or confirmed by means of an evaluation, it may often be possible to modify the design or devise foundations which leave 'in situ' remains sealed and undisturbed. (E.H. statement para 8.1).
- ❖ Proposals that will have a material impact on the historic fabric of the church, such as new ringing chambers, other tower works, new vestries and kitchens or lavatories. Once again obvious historic features should be avoided and early consultation with both architect and archaeological advisor is advised. In addition to more obvious features thought must be given to other features, such as paintings, that may survive beneath more modern coats of lime wash. Once again there may be cost implications involved in the monitoring of works and in archaeological recording.

While the work is under way:

- ❖ Features of archaeological/historical interest may be discovered in the process of undertaking necessary repairs to the historic fabric: the archaeological adviser and Secretary of the DAC should be informed immediately.
- ❖ The specification for works to be undertaken by grant of Faculty and issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese is a legal authorisation to undertake such work. If compelling circumstances indicate that an amendment to the original design is necessary, further legal authorisation by Faculty will usually be required. The Secretary of the DAC must be informed immediately and advice sought.